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"It's something I've wanted to do for a long time," says Barbara Collins, talking about the new world of opportunity that is unraveling to her through the creation of her own business. Collins literally sewed her first seed toward entrepreneurship twenty-three years ago — the same day her second child entered first grade.

"I've made about everything there is to make," says Collins who plans to manufacture a wide variety of clothing and accessories in her new headquarters. Her sergers, lockstitch machines, and bar techs (about sixteen machines overall) will enable her to create products for companies nationwide, including straps used to hold bombs for the US military.

In the heart of Jackson County, Collins Manufacturing is taking shape. Already, Barbara is training staff for her own business as well as another local sewing factory.

Barbara completed her entrepreneurial training through a partnership effort between The Center for Rural Development, the Jackson County Entrepreneurial Training Center, and the Small Business Administration office, located at The Center. From payrolls to tax laws and staffing concerns to marketing, the ten-week, sixty-hour class gave Collins the pattern to start her own successful business.

Her son Larry, that child who entered first grade all those years ago, took the entrepreneurial class with his mother. He plans to join her as Collins Manufacturing expands. "The instructor of the class continues to be a big help to us," Collins says. "He's really been supportive. We got so much good information from the classes." And each of the partner groups continues to assist her as she "stitches" her dream.

THE CENTER's entrepreneurial training has enabled
barbara collins to turn a mid-life job change
into the creation of her dream business